

What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that affects humans and animals. It is caused by bacteria of the genus *Leptospira*. In humans, it can cause a wide range of symptoms, some of which may be mistaken for other diseases.

Who gets leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is most common in temperate or tropical climates. Few people get this disease in the U.S., but there is a risk of infection for people who have contact with infected animals or contaminated soil or water. People who work outdoors or with animals, or those involved in freshwater activities may be at increased risk for infection.

How is leptospirosis spread?

The bacteria that cause leptospirosis are spread through urine or body fluids of infected animals. Humans can also acquire the bacteria by drinking or having contact with contaminated water (such as through swimming, rafting or kayaking) or soil that has been contaminated by urine or body fluids of infected animals. Animals that commonly have the bacteria include rodents, cattle, swine, dogs, and horses. In general, the bacteria are not transmitted from person to person.

What are the symptoms of leptospirosis?

People exposed to leptospirosis may have severe symptoms or no symptoms at all. The symptoms of leptospirosis include a sudden fever, chills, headache, severe body aches, and fatigue. It can also affect the liver, kidneys, or nervous system. The disease may last for several weeks. It is rarely fatal.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

The time from exposure to the bacteria to onset of symptoms ranges from two days to four weeks.

How is leptospirosis diagnosed?

Leptospirosis is diagnosed using specific laboratory tests on blood samples.

What is the treatment for leptospirosis?

Specific antibiotics may be prescribed by a doctor to treat leptospirosis. It is important for people with this disease to receive treatment as soon as possible.

How can leptospirosis be prevented?

There are several ways to prevent leptospirosis, including:

- Seeing a veterinarian to get vaccines for pets that can protect against this disease.
- Avoiding contact with animal urine or body fluids, especially if you have any cuts or abrasions on the skin.
- Not swimming in, walking in, or swallowing water that may contain animal urine.

- Wearing protective clothing or footwear near soil or water that may be contaminated with animal urine.

Is there a vaccine available to protect against leptospirosis?

There is no vaccine available for humans. There are vaccines available for animals. Consult with your veterinarian regarding vaccination of pets.

How can I get more information about leptospirosis?

- If you have concerns about leptospirosis, contact your healthcare provider.
- Call your local health department. A directory of local health departments is located at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/local-health-districts/>
- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/>.

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